Original Article

Moral subjects, healthy adolescents: Analyzing the discourse of health education in Greek secondary education

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Abstract In this article, our aim is to put forward a sociological analysis of the educational policy on health education in Greece. Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of self-techniques, this article highlights how moral subjects are formed within the Discourse of Health Education. Analyzing all the health education texts that the Ministry of Education addresses to pupils and teachers in secondary education, we try (i) to explore all the main statements that compose the semantic space of health education within which such terms as 'communicative competence', 'life-skills' or 'active listening' take on their meaning and delimit the ways in which teacher and pupils are to view each other and (ii) to capture the ways through which these statements not only represent the moral claims of health education but also entail a set of techniques the adolescents are called to implement in order to become health-conscious and to avoid unhealthy behaviors. Finally, we show how these self-techniques become relevant in relation to the ritual rules of the experiential education within which adolescents are called to adopt healthy lifestyles.
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Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate the Discourse of Health Education (HE) in secondary education in Greece. More specifically, we seek to examine

empirically Foucault's idea on moral subject construction within a discoursive formation. We argue that HE constitutes such a formation within which techniques for shaping moral subjects are set in motion.

In the Foucauldian-oriented literature, emphasis is placed on the socio-historical conditions of emergence of a corpus of knowledge on body hygiene, through which educational policies for analyzing, classifying and acting on the body have been valued and institutionalized. According to this argumentation, it is held that contemporary HE biopolitics combine a naturalistic language on adolescent psychology with more or less explicit moral and political claims (Nettleton, 1988; Bunton, 1992; Thorogood, 1992; Kirk and Spiller, 1993; Lowenberg and Davis, 1994; Gastaldo, 1998; Tyler, 1998; Foucault, 2000; Moran, 2000; Armstrong, 2002; Pilcher, 2007).

Today, HE, as health politics, recontextualizes socio-psychological models on health prevention and behavioral change, aimed, on the one hand, at individual empowerment, autonomy and healthy lifestyle choices and, on the other, at mitigating social inequalities and school failure (Lupton, 1995, Chapter 2). Within this overlapping of a knowledge on healthy self and of moral-political pursuings, the old-fashioned biologically based dichotomy between health and illness is replaced by the notion of risk and most of the contemporary health politics are permeated by the surveillance of those who are engaged in unhealthy or risky behaviors. The diffusion of this new notion means that the dichotomy of healthy/unhealthy populations is no longer conceived to be tenable and the 'high-risk groups' are coming to the fore, which means that illness lies everywhere and that individuals are called upon to abstain from whatever threatens their health and whatever does not promote a healthy lifestyle (Lupton and Petersen, 1996; Petersen, 1998).

Here, the crucial word is 'whatever'. The Discourse of Health Education, aided by what Armstrong (1995) has called Surveillance Medicine, detects danger and threat in the environment, considered not only in its physical but also in its social dimension. As a consequence, individuals are called upon to monitor as much what they eat or consume as the social spaces of interaction or the peer groups in which they are engaged. According to this view, even if someone gets sick for hereditary reasons, one is seen more or less morally responsible because (s)he did not manage to cope with or control environmental dangers and influences. It is considered probable that one's health, at some phase in his or her life, will be in jeopardy, either for reasons of ignorance or of lack of self-control. Construing and valuing in this way the notion of risk, HE moralizes health prevention practices by making people become constantly aware of environmental dangers and by intensifying anxieties issued by the uncertainty of that awareness (Crawford, 2004).

Methodology: The Sample of Texts and the Analytical Strategy

HE curriculum in Greek high school[1] is organized around one core thematic axis and eight fields related to special social issues such as 'substance use prevention', 'sexual education', 'consumption and health', 'physical exercise and health', 'environment and health' and 'stress coping'. The core thematic axis entitled 'interpersonal relationships – mental health' is expected to function as knowledge base for these fields.[2] Our aim in the next sections is to critically analyze the discoursive resources from which the HE body of knowledge is made up and the self-techniques this knowledge prescribes for raising adolescents' health consciousness.

The sample of texts we examined consisted of both the HE curriculum and the official texts of the core thematic axis ('interpersonal relationships – mental health') that the Ministry of Education issues and addresses to teachers and pupils of secondary education (13–17 years of age).[3] Additionally, we analyzed all the texts related to HE and to its implementation in Greek secondary school, for the reason that a Discourse (in our case, health education) is not confined to or identified with one specific institution (secondary education) but instead it is dispersed and produced by diverse interest groups in relevant institutions that claim a monopoly at what they consider as scientific or useful knowledge object (Fairclough, 2003, p. 35).

For example, doctors in the medical school of Athens may publish texts on, say, the principles and goals of HE, and psychologists of the Institute for Child and Adolescence Support may outline in another text how adolescents' psychology should be viewed by practitioners or how educationalists have to handle learning relationships in schools. As a consequence, if one is to examine the HE texts that the Ministry of Education publishes for school usage then (s)he has to take into consideration the relevant voices of these unofficial texts (Asimakopoulos, 2000; Weare and Gray, 2000; Gouvra *et al*, 2005; Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006), the way these voices have been produced and their recontextualization in the official HE texts.

Having said that, the texts we analyzed do not stand in isolation to each other but they come to function as a semantic space of statements on account of which an object of knowledge is to be defined (health education) and health practices for adolescents are prescribed. Our analytical strategy is permeated by two interrelated objectives: on the one hand, we have tried to capture the way in which health practices are semantically thematized or patterned within the HE discourse and, on the other, we focused on the ways in which these patterns claim to organize joint action within the school context.

To this end, by using analytical tools issuing from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),[4] we focused on the Representational, Actional and Identificational

meaning of the texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27), that is, we concentrated on how the knowledge of health education is represented, on the kind of social relations and actions construed as useful or desirable for both the educationalists and the pupils and on the relation adolescents have to maintain with their selves in order to be healthy. In the extracts presented in the next sections we throw light on the interrelatedness of these three meaning levels and, in particular, we picked up those extracts that show how the assumptions (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55), the modality (Halliday and Martin, 1993, pp. 42–46; Wood and Kroger, 2000, pp. 4–21; Fairclough, 2003, p. 165) and what Lemke calls attitudinal meaning (Lemke, 1995, p. 40; 1998, pp. 33–35) function as constitutive resources not only for constructing HE statements (for example, 'life skills') but also for providing adolescents with those self-techniques (Foucault, 1987; 1988, p. 18) deemed to install in them healthy habits. Some of the questions we posed in researching the extracts were the following: On what kind of assumptions HE is based in order to establish its raison d' etre in secondary education in Greece? How is the ideal learning relationship in HE meetings constructed? What is the stance that the texts take toward the practices considered to promote health consciousness? In what ways are these health practices connected with adolescents' self-identities?

The Normative Expectations of Communicative Competence

Looking at the way in which secondary education HE curriculum is semantically organized, one can easily see that the knowledge that is recontextualized is based on a psychotherapeutic terminology[5] through which, we will argue, it is clearly defined how teachers and pupils are to act and to view each other. More specifically, the psychotherapeutic language HE uses in order to structure its knowledge is organized around three axes regarding educationalist–pupil relationship, axes which, at the same time, function as moral exhortations.

First, the exhortation that the pupil should talk about 'the way he is related to himself and to others'.[6] In this way, speech and 'communication' are reduced to a competence that one can act upon or govern and functions as a means of monitoring health or illness. Second, the exhortation that the educationalist should view adolescence as a period characterized by a specific motive moving toward a specific end: that the adolescent 'needs to revolt' against his parents in order that he become autonomous (Kassapidou *et al*, 2000a, p. 17). Here, a cultural value, that of autonomy, is to be inscribed as a normative criterion for diagnosing healthy behavior. Third, the exhortation of facing pedagogic relationship in sentimental terms, a process that has the power to make adolescents' interiority a sacred world the educationalist-listener has to protect and the pupil-speaker has to transform into words.

HE, in trying to set in motion these three exhortations, is making use of the experiential education. In practice, this means that these exhortations come to function as scenarios of action delimiting and construing the pedagogic relationship between the educationalist and the pupils. More specifically, the educationalist is represented not as one who 'exclusively transmits knowledge' but, instead, as the 'facilitator', the 'moderator' or the 'coordinator' (Gouvra *et al*, 2005, p. 130). These three words, in essence, are to denote the way in which the educationalist is expected to treat his or her pupils or, in more sociological terms, the normative expectations addressed to him whenever he is to present himself vis-à-vis pupils, whenever experiential education is to take place. Thus, the educationalist 'must'

> elicit from and help pupils to find out their personal needs
>
> practice himself in carefully listening to and in helping pupils in describing their personal experiences or in analyzing what these experiences mean to them
>
> become interested in why pupils come to ask a specific question and not in answering that question. The educationalist should detect the causes that make the pupil ask this specific question. (Asimakopoulos, 2000, p. 32)

In that case, in our view, we have to do with the staging of an impression management, as Goffman would put it, of which the moral rules stem from the HE body of knowledge and which bears with it such specific practical effects to make pupils realize that their interiority is worth talking about or to make educationalists believe in their 'role'. The educationalist's involvement in the 'role' prescribed by HE and set in motion in practice through experiential education presupposes his initiation in reflecting upon his own interiority, that is, presupposes his passage through 'training seminars' related to HE, in which he is called to play the pupil role and make his internal world an object of reflection:

> Educationalists who are to practice HE programs need to familiarize themselves with such matters as group dynamics, for the whole methodology is based on interaction, on transmitting experiences, on group or on pairs conversation, on analyzing emotions and not on transmitting knowledge. (Asimakopoulos, 2000, p. 33)
> Teachers must above all inspect and assess their own emotions, their values and their attitudes so as to be able, both with their behavior and with their teaching, to cultivate in pupils feelings of self-interrogation,

> self-control and self-evaluation. They must be able to respect their pupils and their emotions and to cooperate with the group in order to promote the interpersonal bonds of their pupils. (Asimakopoulos, 2000, p. 34)

> In reflecting on their own interiority through these training seminars, educationalists come to believe in the importance of health education's moral-practical aims and ideals which are all the more substantial and interesting for them, the less the terms of producing that belief remain unthinkable and the more health education's assumptions seem self-evident to them. Having said that, one could assert that 'educating educators' functions as a means of producing what Bourdieu has called illusio, without which the field cannot work (Bourdieu, 1994, pp. 151–152)

Nevertheless, both experiential education and training seminars constitute places – for pupils the former, for educationalists the latter – where participants become familiar with techniques through which they become initiated and devote themselves to the 'role' they are called to implement. Within the HE discourse, 'communication' is to be represented as a skill an educationalist does not possess but which he is expected to acquire. The importance and the need of acquiring that skill seems to stem from the fact that if only pupils practice all those things that are expected in relation to it, then they 'learn to learn'. But what exactly do they learn? Given that HE is not about transmitting only one specific scientific field (such as biology, medicine, psychology and so on), pupils are called upon to apprehend that, insofar as their teachers think highly of them, they understand them and are spontaneous, it is worth talking and 'communicating' with them:

> One of the most important communication skills is the competence of listening to other persons attentively and in an active and authentic way. Knowing that one is noticed and respected proves to be too agreeable an experience and useful as far as problem solving is concerned. One may not be in need of advice. What he needs is a listener who encourages him to talk. As long as one can express his thoughts, he feels more comfortable in handling difficult situations or in overcoming problems. The listener must not be judgmental: one can talk freely only if one feels that one's sayings are to be accepted and that one is not to be considered weak or inept as a person. (Weare and Gray, 2000, p. 112)

What is revealing in this passage is not so much its truthfulness but, rather, the claim of considering the learning process in psychotherapeutic terms and

the 'need' to problematize the adolescent's interiority by making it as an object of thought. The effect of diffusing that claim in school life is, in our view, that adolescent's health and well-being are to be viewed in emotional terms and that, in other words, educationalists and pupils are expected to manage their behavior and to present themselves in specific ways. We elaborate on this point in the next section.

Impression Management in Health Education

In the texts we examined, one widely used communication skill is what is referred to as 'active listening'. Educators participating in training seminars are expected to become familiar in fine detail with specific ways of impression management, which will have to be transmitted when practicing HE experiential education. As it has been shown, the aim of putting in action that skill is to 'help pupils talk'. For that purpose, educators are called to give the impression of 'fully attending to their speaker', which means that they are encouraged to manage at the same time their body gestures, their facial expressions, their sayings and their feelings:

> Active listening has to do with the full attention the listener gives to his speaker. In that way, the listener has to keep visual contact with his speaker, to retain a friendly bodily gesture, to reciprocate a smile when the speaker smiles, to sulk when the speaker sulks, to nod when the speaker wants to reveal something personal. The whole procedure may be followed by short encouraging expressions such as: 'go on' or 'really?' (Weare and Gray, 2000, p. 114)

The educator has to perform these impression managements in such a way as to show his commitment in the seriousness of his role, in order to become believable by his audience. For that purpose, he is told what to avoid so as to prevent pupils from 'not disclosing themselves'.

> Besides active listening, there are additional methods that can make an individual talk. By saying 'if I were you, …' it is considered as an inappropriate choice. However effective may feel the educator who opts for that wording, he is not helpful for those experiencing serious problems. (Weare and Gray, 2000, p. 115)

It seems that the educator-listener is expected to exhibit self-control not only in his facial expressions or bodily gestures but also in the way his sayings are structured, because the more effective his self-control is, the more solid the expressive status quo of the interaction will be, and, as a consequence, the more

possible the definition permeating the situation is to be confirmed. Normative expectations addressed to the educator entail the moral obligation that he believes as far as he can in the performance of his role, of which the practicing calls for devotion and discipline in relation to handling what the speaker is saying. 'Retrospection', 'summarization' and 'clarification' are represented as the par excellence techniques for that kind of wording management:

> **Retrospection**: listener repeats to the speaker what he thinks he listened. Listener may either repeat what the speaker said or comment the way of his sayings (e.g. 'you seem too angry whenever you refer to your mother'). Additionally, he may link two different things the speaker referred to (e.g. 'you said you want to find new friends and now you are saying that you want to expand your horizons. Do you think these two things are compatible?'). **Summarization**: sometimes, repeating the last part of the speaker's clause proves to be valuable, for the listener is giving the message that he is attending his speaker and that he can help him. Summarizing what the speaker told seems to be too useful a technique in making him think more clearly. **Clarification**: in some cases, it might be useful for the listener to ask the speaker to elaborate on something considered important for further investigation. (e.g. 'could you tell me what you mean when you are saying that teachers don't like you?'). Generally speaking, listeners are suggested not to ask questions. They need to think about the reasons of posing a question. (Weare and Gray, 2000, p. 116)

The main impression the educator-listener has to transmit is that he fully attends to the adolescent-speaker, that what the speaker says does matter and, finally, that it is worth talking to someone who 'knows' how to listen. This is the definition of the situation of all the variants of experiential education implemented into the secondary school context. However, one has to keep in mind that this definition of the situation stems from the body of knowledge structuring HE semantic space but it is up to the educator to put this definition in practice by managing skillfully the speaker's wordings so as listeners are given the impression that what matters is talking about one's experiences.

The educator-listener is expected to show clearly his 'respect' for the speaker, to prove that he can 'be put in speaker's shoes' and that he is 'authentic' by manipulating what the assumptions of 'good communication' exhort him to tell. In that way, within this semantic space, 'communication' comes to obtain a moral dimension, for it is construed not only as a linguistic skill but also – or, mainly – as a social competence, in the sense of the extent to which the educator, in practicing the normative expectations prescribed by psychotherapeutic terminology, complies with a specific moral rule, that is, of making the adolescent 'disclose himself'.

Life-skills and the moral status of health

The normative expectations we described not only structure 'communication's' social meaning and prescribe impression management techniques appropriate for implementing the educator's role but concern adolescents as well, for they are allocated the role of the speaker. Pupils are called to become involved in a kind of introspection and to confess, in some way, their 'problem'. To the extent that adolescents are putting into words their problem, they are considered to acquire all those 'skills' that can make them adopt healthy behaviors and protect them from environmental 'threats'. Within the HE body of knowledge these 'skills' are represented as moral-practical choices that a pupil is to obtain through his participation in experiential education:

> Health education should aim not only at transmitting knowledge or experiences related to some specific topic. Pupils must also be taught 'life skills', such as how to make plans in order to achieve their goals, how to overcome obstacles which make their realization difficult, how to work out disputes, how to solve problems, how to resist to pressures of their (social) environment, how to make decisions and how to communicate effectively with the others. (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 42)

It seems that the urgency of having all those 'life-skills' does not emerge from making adolescents healthy in biological terms, but from signaling their adjustment in social life in general. 'Life-skills' are represented as necessary because of their practical effectiveness and due to the fact that they provide adolescents with the means of coping with 'environmental pressures'.

> By 'life-skills' we mean all those techniques that help one cope successfully with his environment in which he lives. The term 'life-skills' refers to a wide range of social, cognitive and emotional skills. According to modern educational research, it is held that adolescents, in order to be able to face challenges of their environment, will have to develop the capacity of working out too many information, the capacity of communicating and of adapting into different educational or working environments, by learning how to learn. (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 71)

In that passage, 'life-skills' are positively valued as competences-preconditions for achieving the core moral claim of HE, 'behavioral change' that is to be presented all the more as urgent, the more it is imbued by the authority of science. HE knowledge functions both as a normative criterion for making adolescents 'say no to peer pressures' and as a source for interpreting reality, or

else, as a moral standard for making decisions related to their real-life practical situations:

> For instance, the benefit pupils gain from knowing the damaging repercussions of smoking is considered essential and important. If, however, this knowledge is not accompanied by the simultaneous teaching of life-skills, such as resisting to peer-group pressure or coping with advertising, then it can be proved insufficient and powerless as against the environment, which entails the possibility children start smoking. (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 30)

The knowledge HE recontextualizes is selected not only for classifying and interpreting social life but also and mainly for offering moral standards in defining what is desirable and undesirable. In case that pupils want, due to their 'need' of belonging or of feeling secure, to avoid 'environment threats' then they will have to 'change their behaviour' or at least to acquire all those 'life-skills' that can offer them the means of 'decision making' of 'resolving conflicts' and so forth. It is this knowledge base that comes to function as the moral underlay facilitating pupils to shape their subjectivity. Experiential education within secondary education provides the rule for making the knowledge about 'life-skills' into a technique, or into a discoursive practice, in Foucauldian terms, in relation to which pupils are prompted to act upon their interior world and to handle their choices in order to be healthy.

If pupils, for example, are to learn the so-called problem-solving life-skill, then they have to write down 'a problem that must be solved', 'possible solutions', 'disadvantages and advantages for each of them', to 'opt for the fittest options', to define 'the cases of their implementing' and, finally, to judge 'whether they failed or not' (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 58). In claiming that such 'life-skill' practices have the virtue of making pupils to 'learn how to learn', the HE discourse manages to consolidate both a terminology that is expected to permeate learning relationship, and a means by which the pupil is expected to view herself within and outside the school context. What is at stake in these 'life-skills' is not whether adolescents are being offered specific solutions for problems they face but that they are called to implement a scenario of action these techniques prescribe in and through which they can view themselves as subjects who can and should define some of their life experiences as problems deserving solutions, who can and should cope with it in a rational way and who can and should surpass it effectively.

This moral-practical orientation of such life-skills comes to function, additionally, as a criterion that students are to apply in their everyday lives so as to 'surpass obstacles' and to adopt healthy behaviors. Students are made into subjects only through practice, by observing and monitoring as much the

external aspects of their actions as their 'attitude' toward a healthy life. More specifically, students are prompted to 'taste some healthy food whenever they are hungry', to 'replace unhealthy food with healthy ones' or to 'prepare some attractive dishes with healthy ingredients' (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 64). Within the contexts of such practices, sobriety and self-monitoring are the main elements of a rational life plan that adolescents are called to put in motion, or else, adolescents are to be made into subjects only to the extent that they pursue a life plan they have scheduled and to proceed in rational options in order to realize moral aims.

According to this value-orientated rational action, in Max Weber's terms, pupils are incited to answer such questions as 'which of your health-related behaviors would you like to change', 'how difficult is it for you to make such changes', 'in what ways would you like to change them' or 'how much time would it take for you in order to realize these changes' (Theodorakis and Chasandra, 2006, p. 79). Pupils, in being committed not to some external authority but to themselves, are to be considered accountable in case they are deviating from the 'goals' they have laid down and, consequently, to forge their identity in relation to failures and successes they have performed. Experiential education constitutes the place where the action is, that is, it becomes the place where the adolescent's interiority is made into the principal aim of moral comportment and healthy behavior and where the techniques in which he is initiated can make him the subject of his own choices.

The ritual of experiential education

One final question that guided our analysis was to see whether and in what ways the educator–pupil relationship is sustained by ritual rules. According to Goffman's argument that whenever someone presents himself before an audience he wishes his impressions be taken seriously and his definition of the situation become accepted and that, in realizing these objectives, he must have at his disposal the necessary expressive equipment (Goffman, 1959, pp. 22–26), then one can easily understand why within experiential education priority is given in setting the stage of the performances. In the process of trying to solidify and transmit the impression that the experiential education is imbued by 'a climate of trust, warmth and encouragement', the educationalist has to prepare, organize and decorate the classroom in an extremely ordered way:

> **Room preparation**: it is suggested that the HE classroom should be clean, comfortable, luminous and be used only for HE purposes. The classroom needs to contain visual technologies, blackboard, tables, chairs and no desks. In case there are desks, you should put them near the wall. You must have large papers (1×0.60 m), flip-charts, coloured markers and

> chalks. You put the chairs in circle and in equal distance among them. The arrangement in circles is proposed as the most appropriate because in that way communication becomes more effective and complete and each member can become at once transmitter and receiver. (Stappa-Mourtzini, 2007, p. 59)

It seems that the main precondition of managing effectively the mise-en-scene of experiential education is tied up with controlling the space and the bodies. The roles participants are called to perform, that of pupil-speaker and educationalist-listener, entail the communication of the signs that inform about the seriousness or the officiality of taking part in experiential education and of the importance of the meetings. These signs refer to 'putting chairs in circle', which makes the participants manage their facial expressions and body moves in order to begin to play their parts:

> Educationalist welcomes the students, he introduces himself and informs them that the meetings of HE are to take place in that classroom, mentioning them the timetable. Educationalist has to be sure that the provision in circles allows visual contact both among students and with the coordinator. Additionally, he must place chairs in an equal distance between them and to prevent pupils from forming groups of two or three individuals in relation to who they like or dislike. Putting chairs in circles provides participants with the possibility of seeing one another, for during communication non-verbal messages are more powerful than the verbal ones. What matters in verbal messages concerns the intensity, the tone and the rapidness, while everything in the non-verbal is deemed important: the moves, the glances, the way one is sitting or is dressed etc. (Stappa-Mourtzini, 2007, p. 60)

The impression management we previously analyzed could be a matter of agent's improvization only to the extent that it complies with the definition of the situation, which is sedimented according to the social front components that fit the relevant roles. For example, all the embodied actions educators have to engage in – 'welcoming pupils, informing them', 'introducing themselves' – so that 'visual contact' may be facilitated and the 'forming of groups' may be avoided, are prescribed by the ritual of experiential education, or else, the signs composing the social front of the roles the participants are called to put in action within experiential education, insofar as they are inscribed as taken-for-granted techniques if interaction is to be meaningful, are to be perceived as cultural maps that orient their actions.

The educator and students jointly interact so that, whatever their intentions, HE value assumptions and orientations are assured. The main impression that

is constructed during the HE ritual is that what happens in those meetings is to be considered as unique and special and the way in which information is transmitted is highly organized and austerely delimited. For example, participants are obliged to follow and to commit themselves to the specific regularities on time:

> Time duration should allow sufficient issue elaboration in each meeting, without it being restricted or be tiresome as much for the coordinator as for the pupils (suggested duration 90 min). The regularity in the meetings and the commitment of the group participants as far as their presence and their involvement in them is concerned constitute essential presuppositions for the normal group functioning and for the effective covering of the curriculum sections. The frequency once a week for the meetings is considered the most appropriate time succession, for there are no time gaps and it allows the handling of the information on the part of the pupils in the interval between two successive meetings. (Kassapidou *et al*, 2000a, p. 42)

This organized time usage seems to be represented as an essential feature for the HE ritual, for its implementation prompts students to retain a disciplined relation with time, to put limits to themselves and to commit themselves in relation to the moral value of such a practice. Commitment is to be construed as the par excellence desirable way through which students are to view themselves and others when taking part in experiential education:

> The non-negotiables:
>
> If the group is to work effectively, then there has to be put limits (rules). One has to ask for limits, otherwise he cannot live. Limits must be put in our family, in our work and in the school. Limits and rules apply to all and must be respected. When, for example, we say that we must be reliable in arrival time, the coordinator is the one who first of all must show precision. If the session begins at 10, then the educationalist must be there at 9:55 and not at 10:05 because in case that a pupil comes at 10:10 the educationalist should not criticise him. The coordinator is the one who proposes in the group the non-negotiables which may be altered to some degree or be supplemented. The non-negotiables are written in a paperboard that is placed on the wall. The non-negotiables will have to be realizable and attainable:
>
> We attend all the sessions
>
> We are reliable in arrival time

> When the session begins we should not eat and drink coffee. (Stappa-Mourtzini, 2007, p. 65)

Commitment, discipline and being in line with the timetable of HE meetings are to be inscribed as valuable aims worthy of being pursued by adolescents and as moral standards for having one accepted in these meetings. Adolescents are prompted to act upon their relationship with time and to acknowledge the relevance and practicality of setting limits 'in school, family and work'. Self-commitment is but a behavioral pattern in which adolescents have to initiate and the attempt to follow that pattern is indicative of the honesty by which they are to interpret their performances and their belonging in the group.

The moral substratum of self-commitment, or what in HE texts is referred to as 'contract', and the sources used for valuing healthy behavior are 'feelings' and 'responsibility'. Prioritizing feelings and autonomy constitute two ways through which HE makes self-commitment into a taken-for-granted assumption upon which the internal world of the adolescent is to be constructed:

> If the group is to work effectively, then participants will have to set the terms of its functioning and they make a 'contract' of which the rules they are committed to follow and specify (e.g. opening and termination time of the group, the day that the session will take place, all pupils must be present except for serious reasons etc.). Pupils indicate how they would like others and the coordinator to behave (for example, avoiding irony, respecting others' opinion, discretion, avoiding catechesis etc.). Also, the educationalist adds what he expects from the pupils. It is about an emotional contract … The contract will have to be signed from both the pupils and the educationalist and functions as the reference point whenever something goes wrong (for example, if someone is repeatedly late for no serious reason, he is not to be accepted because he disturbs others' work and he cannot follow the route of the activities). It is of highly educational importance, for it helps pupils become involved in the educational practice and become autonomous beings. (Kassapidou *et al*, 2000a, pp. 43–44)

This kind of committing oneself to the 'contract' can be effective only to the extent adolescents are to behave in a 'responsible', 'autonomous' and 'conscious' way, that is, in relation to the ideational and practical sources the HE truth regime provides so that they can construe and value their actions. Space management and self-commitment are but two ways for making adolescents disclose themselves when experiential education takes place. One additional technique this truth regime offers has to do with the ways in which they are prompted to talk and to put their interiority into words through 'narrating'.

The individual self comes to function as the main ground upon which pupils are called to forge their personal narrative and set in motion the speaker-role. Adolescent-speakers are becoming involved in self-reflection by rethinking their past school experiences as a means to become closer to each other:

> We continue our acquaintance. Tell pupils to discuss in pairs for 5 min about their selves. Then, they will have to present each other in the audience. In that phase, tell them to say a few things on their personal interests and their families. For example, Helen and Kostas talk with each other for 10 min and then Kostas presents Helen as follows: 'Helen likes sports and music. She wants to study Economics and in her free time plays volley. In summer she goes to Naksos Island where her parents come from. She has a brother who is student in Athens'. Then Helen will have to present Kostas. In that way, some pupils have the opportunity to present the pupils who are not so willing to talk about their selves, so that they integrate in the group. (Stappa-Mourtzini, 2007, p. 62)

Within a time limit of 10 min, pupils are told to reflect upon their past school life, their preferences, their value-system, and themselves, to choose those aspects of their self that fit in the proper self-presentation and to make a narrative showing the involvement of the speakers in the real reality of the 'acquaintance'. As shown, the 'group' is to function as the interactional or ritual condition for making an adolescent's interiority and feelings into entities that he should value, judge, think of, register, classify and/or reject.

For example, adolescents are fostered to think of 'their school life from the elementary years until now' using an emotional vocabulary, to value 'what was the best and the worst class', to search for 'the causes that made it so', writing them down on the 'wheel of what'. The aim of that practice is to 'get them to talk about their feelings' and to 'discuss them with their friends'. The moral significance that is attributed to disclosing their feelings through these practices is much more evident in a similar activity, the 'wheel of how':

> We propose pupils draw three wheels. In the first wheel entitled 'How I see myself' they have to write such things as shy, self-opinioned, nice, sociable, nagger etc. In the second wheel entitled 'How others see me' they have to write things like sentimental, quick-tempered, gentle etc. and in the third entitled 'How I would like others see me' they could write such words as stable, cooperative, self-composed. Then they discuss in pairs what they wrote and whoever wants may talk to the group that is ordered in a circle. (Stappa-Mourtzini, 2007, p. 63)

It seems that this act of self-reflection comes to function as much as a means for the making of an adolescent's identity and of his moral substance and as a

mark of confirming institutionally the value the HE regime attributes to revealing oneself when taking part in experiential education. The honesty with which pupils are involved in the speaker role, insofar as it constitutes a ritual precondition for that participation, forms the main ground for constructing health consciousness and for achieving self-knowledge or self-esteem. Within the HE statements we have so far analyzed, self-revealing is what signals and transmits to others the impression that one is authentic, that one believes in the moral and therapeutic value of managing his/her interiority.

Finally, the techniques of narrating function and the exhortation of having pupils write down their feelings through remembrance remind us of what Illouz says on the relation of textuality to emotional experience. According to her analysis, when one is writing down his/her feelings, this means that the feelings come to be inscribed and to be objectified into a delimited space, creating distance between experiencing that feeling and the consciousness the individual has for it. In giving names to feelings through the act of self-reflection, irrespective of its various purposes (for example, prevention, psychic well-being, 'communicating'), one provides them with an ontology, one makes them visible and locates them into the interior world of its agent, something that may go against their volatile and contextual nature (Illouz, 2007, p. 33). In that way, feelings are made into something one can observe, analyze, classify, act upon and access quantitatively.

Conclusions

By examining empirically all the HE texts concerning secondary education in Greece, we tried to capture the self-techniques this discoursive formation provides in constructing adolescents as moral subjects. We argued that (i) 'communication', 'active listening', 'life-skills' and 'experiential education' constitute a semantic space within which health prevention and healthiness take on their specific meaning and (ii) they function as statements prescribing techniques of self ('self-commitment', 'narrating', 'contract', 'wheels of how and of why' and so on) by means of which pupils (and teachers) can become health conscious and put into practice healthy lifestyles. One should not view these statements only as a context of signifiers but as a truth regime in which participants can value their action, act upon their embodied selves, discern which is the truth and false, define the desirable and the undesirable, monitor their interior world, commit themselves and create self-concepts.

For example, 'communicative competence' is referred to not only in describing some external reality or the appropriateness of some speech pattern but also in creating a space in which normative expectations are prescribed,

'ideal' self-presentations are promoted and identities are to be formed. Finally, having in mind this action dimension of language use, we tried to emphasize that this space is not inscribed in a social vacuum but it is wholly dependent on the ritual rules we analyzed in relation to experiential education. It is only through these ritual practices that participants can 'communicate' and obtain 'life-skills', or else, the ritual is what provides them with all the semantic, expressive and behavioral sources so that their health practices become meaningful.

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Notes

1 Curriculums in Greek secondary education aim at presenting the goals and objectives of a knowledge object and at specifying the thematic content and the didactic activities that correspond to each of them. Curriculums are varied in relation to the different age grade and to the specific knowledge object. Textbooks for pupils have to be written in accordance with this curriculum structure and the educationalist is obliged to follow it in organizing his/her lessons.

2 In practice, this means that whether the educationalist wants to teach the field 'sexual education' or the field 'substance use prevention', (s)he has to organize his/her lessons in accordance with the content of the core thematic axis by using the vocabulary of 'self-esteem', 'personal identity', 'feelings', 'communication', 'active learning', 'social exclusion' and 'violence'. In the HE curriculum we read: 'Health education themes/issues are structured into nine axes: the first axis constitutes the main thematic content that consists of the interpersonal relationships and the mental health. The remaining eight axes have to do with special issues like sexual education, eating habits, substance use etc. The core thematic axis is focused on the psychosocial factors forming health behaviors and it is analyzed in three levels: the self, my relationship with the others and my relationship with the environment. The issues concerning the main thematic axis constitute the common ground for handling special issues. The special issues are inserted into the main thematic axis as example cases of which the approaching

allows pupils to understand how their behavior in health issues is shaped. The rationale for organizing in that way HE curriculum relies on the fact that information giving is not to lead to desirable outcomes unless it is related to adolescents' ability to handle information and to his/her way of life. Fragmented information giving entails the danger of approaching sensible health issues in a way that is irrelevant to the emotional and interpersonal dimension of adolescents' lives' (http://www.pi-schools.gr/content/odigies.pdf, p. 284).

3 The content of the core thematic axis 'interpersonal relationships – mental health' is to be found in Stappa-Mourtzini (2007); Kassapidou *et al*, 2000a, b (see analyzed Greek text material in references), which outline the principles and the 'philosophy' of health education (Stappa-Mourtzini (2007) and Kassapidou *et al*, 2000a) and the learning activities in which pupils have to engage in HE meetings (Kassapidou *et al*, 2000b).

4 I am grateful to Mrs Mariana Kondyli, Associate Professor in Sociolinguistics at the University of Patras, who brought to my attention the relevance of CDA for operationalizing Foucault's concept of statement (enonce) (Foucault, 1972, pp. 70–90) in textual analysis.

5 First grade (13 years old). **Aims**: making pupils realize the importance of their feelings and that the way they are handling them affects their relationships with their mates and how they feel about themselves. **Thematic content**: emotional identification, emotional expression, coping with stressful situations. Connection with special issues such as what people usually do for altering their mood and in feeling better?' (www.pi-schools.gr/content/odigies.pdf, p. 275).

6 See thematic content in the first page of HE Curriculum: www.pi-schools.gr/dodwnload/programs/deppd/29deppsaps_AgogiYgeiaspdf.

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